

Formatting Dialogue: Step-by-step

SAMPLE TEXT:

Bob walked into the dining room with a worried look on his face. He saw Bill sitting at the table eating a large bowl of cereal. Hi have you seen my cat Bob said. No Bill said I have no idea where your cat is. If you see my cat will you let me know? Bob questioned looking sad. I've looked all over the house and I can't find her anywhere. Of course Bill replied with a tone of concern. Bob left the dining room with his head down and his feet shuffling slowly. Bill went back to his bowl of cereal.

Step 1: New Speaker, New Line

Each time a new speaker speaks, place the dialogue on a new line. Indent new lines.

Bob walked into the dining room with a worried look on his face. He saw Bill sitting at the table eating a large bowl of cereal.

Hi have you seen my cat Bob said.

No Bill said I have no idea where your cat is.

If you see my cat will you let me know Bob questioned looking sad. I've looked all over the house and I can't find her anywhere.

Of course Bill replied with a tone of concern.

Bob left the dining room with his head down and his feet shuffling slowly. Bill went back to his bowl of cereal.

Step 2: Add Quotation Marks

Bob walked into the dining room with a worried look on his face. He saw Bill sitting at the table eating a large bowl of cereal.

"Hi have you seen my cat" Bob said.

"No" Bill said "I have no idea where your cat is."

"If you see my cat will you let me know" Bob questioned looking sad. "I've looked all over the house and I can't find her anywhere."

"Of course" Bill replied with a tone of concern.

Bob left the dining room with his head down and his feet shuffling slowly. Bill went back to his bowl of cereal.

Step 3: Add Punctuation

Dialogue often uses tags (*said, asked, replied, etc*). Link tags to speech with a comma, NOT a period.

“No.” Bill said. [WRONG]

“No,” Bill said. [CORRECT]

Bob walked into the dining room with a worried look on his face. He saw Bill sitting at the table eating a large bowl of cereal.

“Hi, have you seen my cat?” Bob said.

“No,” Bill said. “I have no idea where your cat is.”

“If you see my cat will you let me know?” Bob questioned, looking sad. “I’ve looked all over the house and I can’t find her anywhere.”

“Of course,” Bill replied, with a tone of concern.

Bob left the dining room with his head down and his feet shuffling slowly. Bill went back to his bowl of cereal.

How it would look in MLA:

Bob walked into the dining room with a worried look on his face. He saw Bill sitting at the table eating a large bowl of cereal.

“Hi, have you seen my cat?” Bob said.

“No,” Bill said. “I have no idea where your cat is.”

“If you see my cat will you let me know?” Bob questioned, looking sad. “I’ve looked all over the house and I can’t find her anywhere.”

“Of course,” Bill replied, with a tone of concern.

Bob left the dining room with his head down and his feet shuffling slowly. Bill went back to his bowl of cereal.